



2017 MARYLAND GENERAL ASSEMBLY LEGISLATIVE WRAP-UP

FREDERICK COUNTY GOVERNMENT



County Executive Jan H. Gardner

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EDUCATION

Education is a top priority of the County Executive.

- **LYNX Program** – The State’s budget includes \$236,599 in funding that the County secured to support the innovative LYNX (Linking Youth to New Experiences) program which will be piloted at Frederick High School. This program will allow flexibility and new ways to meet the educational needs of individual students. This program has the opportunity to be a model for the state and the nation.
- **Public Schools** – Frederick County Public Schools were designated to receive \$242,509,000 in state operating dollars. That is an increase of \$8,687,000 over the current year. These funds will help to keep pace with enrollment growth and other educational needs.
- **School Construction** – As of April, Frederick County was recommended to receive \$14,750,000 for six projects:
 - Frederick High replacement (\$8,014,000);
 - new Sugarloaf Elementary (\$4,000,000);
 - new Butterfly Ridge Elementary (\$2,000,000);
 - boilers for Gov. Thomas Johnson Middle (\$246,000);
 - a chiller for Walkersville Middle (\$164,000); and
 - windows and doors for Carroll Manor Elementary (\$326,000).

Additional and final funding allocations for school construction will be made in May by the Board of Public Works.



TRANSPORTATION

- **Highway User Revenue Fund** –

Restoring Highway User Revenue (HUR) or the local share of the gas tax was a top priority of Frederick County and our 12 municipalities. The level of funding received by Frederick County reached its peak in 2007, when HUR funding was

approximately \$13.8 million. During the recession these funds were cut by 96% by the state.

The State's budget included HUR funding for \$1,350,444 for Frederick County in the upcoming fiscal year. Frederick also received \$630,207 in capital grants. Municipalities located in Frederick County were allotted a combined \$811,626 in highway user revenues and \$2,231,971 in capital grants. This is an increase over prior years.

➤ **Paratransit Services –**

Frederick County and the Transportation Services Advisory Committee (TSAC) have advocated for an increase in funding for several years to meet the growing demand for service. Paratransit is primarily used to transport seniors and people with disabilities to medical appointments including dialysis. The population of seniors is growing in Frederick County, exponentially increasing the demand for paratransit services. State funding has remained flat for over 10 years.

The County Executive supported House Bill 627 which allows local jurisdictions to receive rebates on fuel taxes. This bill passed and will provide a small increase in funding support for this critically needed service.

➤ **Interstate 270/U.S. 15 Improvements –**

Frederick County supports a comprehensive long-term solution to traffic congestion along the I-270 Corridor. The I-270 corridor is an important economic engine for Frederick County and the State of Maryland. Frederick County has advocated for completion of the I-270 US 15 multi-modal study, initiated in 1994, to advance comprehensive transportation improvements to address traffic congestions and traffic safety issues. It is critically important to keep people and goods and services moving.

Legislation to complete the multimodal study for improving the I-270/U.S. 15 corridor was introduced and supported by the Frederick County Executive. The bill would require the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) to provide needed funds to complete the multimodal corridor study and report findings to the state legislature. This bill was heard in both the House and the Senate but did not pass.

Governor Hogan recently announced \$100 million to deliver active traffic management, ramp improvements, extended acceleration and deceleration lanes to improve bottle necks and traffic flow. These improvements will make progress to reduce commuter time up to 30 minutes a year. The County will continue to advocate for completion of the multi-modal study to support long-term comprehensive improvements including road lanes and transit.



A top priority of the County Executive was to restore trust in county government. After successfully strengthening local ethic laws, the County Executive advanced a bill to strengthen state ethics provisions that apply to Frederick County. The proposed bill went through a long, local public process and was supported by the County Council, the County's Ethics Task Force, the League of Women Voters and many interested citizens.

The proposed legislation would have strengthened ethics laws by prohibiting Planning Commission members who are candidates for County Executive or County Council from accepting campaign contributions from applicants or parties of record with applications pending before the Planning Commission for rezoning or other specified land-use decisions. Planning Commission members also would have been required to disclose within seven days any ex parte conversations regarding an application. These rules currently apply to county elected officials, including the County Executive and the County Council.

The Frederick County delegation members voted to not advance these ethics provisions and instead advanced a bill introduced by Senator Hough. This bill had no local public hearing process, had no enforcement provisions making it totally ineffective, and the State's Attorney General issued an opinion that questioned the bill's constitutionality. This bill was a poison pill that effectively killed advancing stronger ethics laws for Frederick County.

OTHER PRIORITIES



Fracking Ban –

Frederick County officials received a petition with approximately 1,200 signatures, over 500 emails, and numerous phone calls from County residents seeking a ban on fracking in Frederick County and statewide. In response to significant public input, the Frederick County Executive and County Council supported an extended ban of hydraulic fracking. Citizens expressed concerns about the environmental impacts and risks associated with the fracking process to retrieve natural gas. Impacts on air, water, seismicity, climate and public health were specifically mentioned. Protecting ground water and surface water is of utmost importance. A bill to ban hydraulic fracking passed the state legislature, was signed by the Governor, and is now banned in the State of Maryland.



Downtown Hotel & Conference Center –

The Downtown Hotel and Conference Center is a top economic development and revitalization priority for the City of Frederick, Frederick County, the Frederick County Chamber of Commerce, major employers and others. The project itself will generate 280 jobs and \$25 million in annual economic impact. More importantly, it will continue the success along Carroll Creek and jump start redevelopment on the east side of the City of Frederick. The County's support is through investment in public infrastructure improvements like public parking. Delegation members representing the City of Frederick were successful in obtaining state support in the capital budget including \$16 million in grants over three years for this project. In fiscal year 2018, the project is slated to receive \$5 million. Grants of \$7.5 million and \$3.5 million for the following two years were preauthorized.



Breweries –

Frederick County is a leader in the craft beverage industry in the State. Frederick is home to 12 craft breweries, led by Maryland's largest, Flying Dog Brewery. Flying Dog is planning a multi-million dollar expansion of its brewery operations in the County. The expansion will create 150 new jobs and eventually allow Flying Dog to produce up to 700,000 barrels of beer per year. Today, Flying Dog holds a Class 5 license that limits them to serve up to 500 barrels a year on-premises. The legislation that passed this session and supported by the Frederick County Executive, will allow breweries with Class 5 licenses such as Flying Dog to serve up to 2,000 barrels a year in tap rooms on-premises. Among other provisions, the bill allows the license holder to serve specific samples of beer at no charge, limits the hours new licensees will be allowed to serve alcohol, and requires that beer sold in excess of a specific amount be purchased from a licensed wholesaler.



Funding for Youth Services/Office of Children & Families –

A bill was introduced in the legislature that proposed to shift funds and services that are currently provided through the auspices of Local Management Boards to Youth Services Bureaus. The shift in funding would have impacted the County's ability to provide the following services:

- Afterschool programs for vulnerable youth;
- 2-1-1 service through the Mental Health Association;
- Systems Navigation services for families with intense behavioral, educational, developmental and/or mental health needs; and,
- Diversion programs to steer youth away from the juvenile justice system and steer to community based alternatives.

Frederick County does not have a Youth Services Bureau and the bill as proposed would have resulted in a loss of funding for existing programs and services. Due to input from counties, including Frederick County, the legislation was withdrawn.



Food trucks –

The Frederick County Office of Economic Development has seen a growing interest and demand for food trucks from residents and businesses, particularly breweries, wineries, and distilleries to provide food at their locations. Existing law required food trucks to obtain licenses from local Health Departments in every county where they operated. Wineries, breweries, and distilleries have experienced difficulty finding a licensed food truck due to the distance and time requirement to get re-inspected in Frederick County by the local Health Department. Proposed legislation passed requiring a county health department to issue a mobile reciprocity license to a food truck operator that is operating within 90 miles of its base of operations.



Agricultural Land Preservation Easements –

Frederick County values its agricultural heritage and has been a leader in the nation in agriculture preservation. Frederick County opposed legislation that would allow parcels of agricultural land under permanent preservation easements to be more easily subdivided. This bill could result in wholesale subdivision without review. Under the bill, unless a deed expressly provides otherwise, if an agricultural land preservation easement covers more than one separate parcel of land owned by the same grantor, the parcels may be conveyed separately to a specific family member without specified approval. While opposed, the bill passed and will become law. Local concerns remain that the consequences of this bill will be negative to permanent preservation of agricultural land.